

March 20th, 2012

Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Rosa Delauro

Cites scientific, health, and economic value of biomedical research, calls for continued investment into NIH

Washington, DC— Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (CT-3), Ranking Member on the Labor, Health, and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee, made the following opening statement at the Committee's hearing on the NIH budget today. As Prepared for Delivery:

"Thank you. As we meet here to discuss the National Institutes of Health, the House is preparing to debate a budget plan for the upcoming fiscal year. The House majority is renewing its demands for more and more drastic cuts that will harm medical research and many other priorities vital to our well-being and our future.

"What the NIH does—and the research it supports at universities, hospitals, and institutes across the country—is unquestionably important to each of us. It alleviates suffering and it saves lives. I am a cancer survivor – 26 years this month. I am here today by the grace of God and because of biomedical science.

"Just last year, researchers found that anomalies in a single gene were present in nearly all of the most common types of ovarian cancer – a finding that may lead to more effective diagnostics and treatments. That is but one example of why NIH is the gold standard for biomedical research not only in the United States, but in the world.

"Medical research at NIH and elsewhere has led to, among other things, dramatic reductions in death rates from heart disease and stroke, more effective treatments for HIV/AIDS, improved survival rates for cancers, and better ways of managing diabetes.

"That is why we came together in a bipartisan way to double the NIH budget nearly 15 years ago and why members of this subcommittee on both sides have continued to support NIH funding even in the face of budgetary constraints.

"The work of NIH also brings substantial economic benefits. Every dollar in funding is estimated to result in more than two dollars of business activity and economic impact. A report released yesterday found that NIH funding supports nearly half a million jobs in our country. And another study found that our investment in the Human Genome Project created nearly \$800 billion in economic growth.

"I doubt that we would have had the wherewithal to invest in the Human Genome Project a decade ago if the discussion in DC today had taken place then-- and think of what we would be missing! The medical and biotechnology industries fostered by this research are among the keys to the future growth and world competitiveness of our economy – plus new technologies and more personalized treatments to improve the health of Americans.

"Despite these benefits, recent budget choices have shrunk NIH:

Total funding for the NIH is now 86 million dollars less than it was just two years ago – and that's without considering inflation, meaning that those same dollars are able to support even less research. o When adjusted for increasing costs of medical research, the NIH appropriation has lost 5 percent of its purchasing power since 2010 and 16 percent since 2003. o NIH estimates that it will be able to support 767 fewer research project grants in 2012 than it did in 2010 and 2,700 fewer grants than in 2004. o Ten years ago, NIH was able to fund almost one out of every three applications for research grants. Now, that "success rate" is down to less than one in five.

"This erosion of resources may just be beginning as the majority party demands still more draconian cuts to the programs that are funded in appropriations bills. It appears their 2013 Budget Resolution may walk away from the multi-year agreement negotiated last summer, and instead reduce the limit on overall appropriations down to roughly the level of the 2011 appropriations package passed by the House majority, H.R. 1.

"If the funds available to this subcommittee decrease, it is hard to imagine that the NIH will not shrink along with the total. After all, the NIH is one fifth of our bill. H.R. 1—which the majority now seems to want to repeat—would have cut NIH by \$1.6 billion.

"Budget debates may be conducted using vague terms like "domestic discretionary spending" but in reality we are talking about things like NIH research that saves lives.

"What is at stake is whether national investments in medical research will be continued and expanded, or whether we will scale back these efforts, lose jobs, and cede leadership to other nations.

"I think what we will hear today about the achievements and promise of NIH-sponsored research will remind us why going backward is a dangerous idea for our health, economy, and competitiveness. While our investment in biomedical research has been dwindling, our competitors have been increasing their support for this work.

"The NIH is the leading biomedical research organization in the world, and we must be committed to keeping it that way.

"At today's hearing, Chairman Rehberg has asked the witnesses to focus particularly on the new National Center for Advancing Translational Science and to address issues of possible overlap and duplication with the work of private industry.

"The purpose of that new center is to consolidate and focus NIH resources aimed at improving the science of translating research into better treatments and cures for patients. That is a critically important mission, and it will be a good to get an initial progress report. Possible duplication with the private sector is an important issue to explore, but the most important question should be whether this new focus will help speed cures, diagnostics, and treatments to patients.

"This morning we will hear from two distinguished panels of witnesses. The first consists of leaders from the NIH. The second has experts from the pharmaceutical and biotech industries, along with a leading researcher from a non-profit foundation that works to advance therapies for Parkinson's disease.

"Welcome to each of you. I look forward to your testimony."

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